

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

CARL ANGELO DEJESUS,	:	CIVIL NO. 3:16-cv-0304
	:	
Petitioner	:	(Judge Munley)
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
MARY SABOL,	:	
	:	
Respondent	:	

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MEMORANDUM

On February 22, 2016, petitioner Carl Angelo DeJesus (“petitioner”), a pre-trial detainee presently confined at the York County Prison, York, Pennsylvania, initiated the above petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. (Doc. 1, p. 1). Following preliminary consideration of the petition pursuant to Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts, 28 U.S.C. foll. § 2254 (1977)¹, the Court concludes that the petition is subject to summary dismissal because there are ongoing state court criminal proceedings.

I. Background

Petitioner alleges that during a February 10, 2016, magisterial district justice hearing, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania failed to establish a *prima facie* case against him on

¹Rule 4, which governs preliminary review of petitions, states that “[i]f it plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court, the judge must dismiss the petition and direct the clerk to notify the petitioner.” A petition may be dismissed without review of an answer when the petition is frivolous, or obviously lacking in merit, or where . . . the necessary facts can be determined from the petition itself. . . .” Allen v. Perini, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir. 1970).

various charges in that the Pennsylvania state trooper who testified at the hearing did not meet his burden of proof. (Doc. 1, pp. 2, 6-8). He also alleges that his court appointment counsel was ineffective. (Id. at 2-3). He has not been convicted or sentenced. (Id. at 1, 8).

II. Discussion

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254, a person in state custody may file an application for a writ of habeas corpus challenging the fact or length of his or her confinement. See Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 494 (1973); Tedford v. Hepting, 990 F.2d 745, 748 (3d Cir. 1993). However, this section specifically provides that the person must be in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court. See 28 U.S.C. § 2254(a). It is apparent from the instant petition that petitioner has not yet been tried or convicted on the criminal charges, which appear to be lodged in Lancaster County, and, thus, he is not yet in custody pursuant to the judgment of a state court.

Notwithstanding this deficiency, generally, federal courts must adjudicate all cases and controversies that are properly before them. New Orleans Pub. Serv., Inc. v. Council of City of New Orleans, 491 U.S. 350, 358 (1989). Abstention, however, “is the judicially created doctrine under which a federal court will decline to exercise its jurisdiction so that a state court or state agency will have the opportunity to decide the matters at issue.” Heritage Farms, Inc. v. Solebury Twp., 671 F.2d 743, 746 (3d Cir. 1982). In Younger v. Harris, the United States Supreme Court “established a principle of abstention when federal adjudication would disrupt an ongoing state criminal proceeding.” Yang v. Tsui, 416 F.3d 199, 202 (3d Cir. 2005) (discussing Younger, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)). The Younger Court based its decision

on the principles of comity and “the longstanding public policy against federal court interference with state court proceedings.” Younger, 401 U.S. at 43. Younger abstention applies when the following three requirements are met: “(1) there are ongoing state proceedings that are judicial in nature; (2) the state proceedings implicate important state interests; and (3) the state proceedings afford an adequate opportunity to raise the federal claims.” Lazaridis v. Wehmer, 591 F.3d 666, 670 (3d Cir. 2010) (quoting Addiction Specialists, Inc. v. Twp. of Hampton, 411 F.3d 399, 408 (3d Cir. 2005)).

Notably, even when all requirements are met, abstention is not appropriate when the following extraordinary circumstances exist: “(1) the state proceedings are being undertaken in bad faith or for purposes of harassment or (2) some other extraordinary circumstances exist, such as proceedings pursuant to a flagrantly unconstitutional statute. . . .” Schall v. Jovce, 885 F.2d 101, 106 (3d Cir. 1989). These exceptions are to be narrowly construed. Loftus v. Twp. of Lawrence Park, 764 F. Supp. 354, 357 (W.D. Pa. 1991).

It is clear that petitioner is involved in ongoing criminal proceedings which implicate important state interests and petitioner has failed to demonstrate the presence of extraordinary circumstances that warrant the intervention of a federal court. Out of deference to the state judicial process it is appropriate to abstain from entertaining the petition. Indeed, “[i]n no area of the law is the need for a federal court to stay its hand pending completion of state proceedings more evident than in the case of pending criminal proceedings.” Evans v. Court of Common Pleas, 959 F.2d 1227, 1234 (3d Cir. 1992).

III. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the petition will be dismissed without prejudice.

IV. Certificate of Appealability

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c), unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability (“COA”), an appeal may not be taken from a final order in a proceeding under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. A COA may issue only if the applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). “A petitioner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that jurists of reason could disagree with the district court’s resolution of his constitutional claims or that jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.” Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322 (2003). “When the district court denies a habeas petition on procedural grounds without reaching the prisoner’s underlying constitutional claim, a COA should issue when the prisoner shows, at least, that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the petition states a valid claim of the denial of a constitutional right and that jurists of reason would find it debatable whether the district court was correct in its procedural ruling.” Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000). Here, jurists of reason would not find the procedural disposition of this case debatable. Accordingly, there is no basis for the issuance of a COA.

An appropriate order will issue.

BY THE COURT:

s/James M. Munley
JUDGE JAMES M. MUNLEY
United States District Court

Dated: April 19, 2016